

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3131

INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0128

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAGR CH

SUBJECT: CHINESE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

1. DPA CORRESPONDENT HANS BARGMANN HAS PASSED ON TO USLO OFFICER THE HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT APPARENTLY WAS AN UNUSUALLY FRANK CONVERSATION ON ON PRC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION WITH AN UNNAMED "RESPONSIBLE PERSON" OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE.

2. ASKED ABOUT TOTAL PRC GRAIN PRODUCTION, THE OFFICIAL SAID IT WAS UP FROM 1973 BUT THAT HE COULD NOT GIVE A SPECIFIC FIGURE SINCE ALL REPORTS WERE NOT YET IN. WHEN BARGMANN ASKED IF IT WOULD BE INACCURATE TO USE A FIGURE OF 260 MILLION TONS, THE OFFICIAL REPLIED "JUST UNDER" WHICH BARGMANN INTERPRETS TO MEAN SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 255 AND 260 MILLION TONSA

3. THE OFFICIAL PROVIDED A FIGURE OF 20 MILLION TONS FOR DOMESTIC FERTILIZER PRODUCTION. ASKED ABOUT EDIBLE OIL AND FATS CONSUMPTION, HE SAID THE FIGURE WOULD VARY WIDELY BECAUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE IT
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DEPENDS GREATLY ON THE PRODUCTION OF EACH COMMUNE. CONSUMPTION,

HE SAID, COULD VARY FROM ONE AND HALF TO THREE AND HALF CATTIES PER PERSON PER YEAR DEPENDING ON PRODUCTION.

4. OFFICIALS MADE THE SURPRISING CLAIM THAT PRIVATE PLOTS HAVE NOW BEEN REDUCED TO ONE PERCENT OF TOTAL CULTIVATED ACREAGE, AND SAID AGRICULTURAL POPULATION NOW EIGHTY PERCENT AND GROWING. NATIONWIDE PER CAPITA AGRICULTURAL INCOME IS ONE HUNDRED YUAN. THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION, HE CLAIMED, IS TAKING PLACE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, NOT THE CITIES.

5. COMMENT: A 1974 PRC GRAIN FIGURE AROUND OR JUST UNDER 260 MILLION TONS WOULD SEEM HIGHLY REASONABLE TO US. A LARGE NUMBER OF PRC STATEMENTS HAVE INDICATED THAT 1973 OUTPUT WAS ABOUT 250 MILLION TONS AND RECENT PRC CLAIMS INCLUDING FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER LI CH'ANG'S COMMENTS

TO US SUGGEST THAT A MODERATE BUT NOT SPECTACULAR INCREASE WAS ACHIEVED LAST YEAR. AS FOR THE OFFICIAL'S FERTILIZER FIGURE, IT IS WELL BELOW USG ESTIMATES FOR 1973, BUT IT WOULD TEND TO EXPLAIN WHY PREMIER CHOU'S RECENT CLAIM OF ONLY A 330 PERCENT INCREASE IN FERTILIZER OUTPUT FOR 1964-74 WAS SO MUCH LOWER THAN THE 490 PERCENT 1964-73 RISE WHICH WOULD BE DERIVED BY USING USG FIGURES. THE STATEMENT GIVEN FOR PER CAPITA INCOME COINCIDES WITH LOCAL STATEMENTS USLO OFFICERS HAVE OFTEN HEARD IN VISITS TO COMMUNES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. IT STANDS TO REASON THAT THE RURAL POPULATION IS GROWING IN RELATION TO URBAN POPULATION SINCE BIRTH CONTROL IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED LESS EFFECTIVE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SENT DOWN TO RURAL AREAS EACH YEAR. AS FOR THE OFFICIAL'S COMMENT ON REDUCTION OF PRIVATE PLOTS, WE SUSPECT IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS RATHER THAN STATISTICAL ACCURACY MOTIVATED THIS REMARK.

HOLDRIDGE

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